

Dunsford United Church
March 17, 2024 – Fifth Sunday in Lent
Pulpit Presider: Rev. Darren Liepold

† = stand as you are able

WELCOME AND CELEBRATIONS (Birthdays/Anniversaries, etc.)

† GATHERING HYMN: VU #389 “God is Here” (Fred Pratt Green)

- 1 God is here! As we your people meet to offer praise and prayer,
may we find in fuller measure what it is in Christ we share.
Here, as in the world around us, all our varied skills and arts
wait the coming of the Spirit into open minds and hearts.
- 2 Here are symbols to remind us of our lifelong need of grace;
here are table, font, and pulpit; here the cross has central place.
Here in honesty of preaching, here in silence, as in speech,
here, in newness and renewal, God the Spirit comes to each.
- 3 Here our children find a welcome in the Shepherd's flock and fold;
here as bread and wine are taken, Christ sustains us, as of old.
Here the servants of the Servant seek in worship to explore
what it means in daily living to believe and to adore.
- 4 God of all, of church and kingdom, in an age of change and doubt
keep us faithful to the gospel; help us work your purpose out.
Here, in this day's dedication, all we have to give, receive;
we, who cannot live without you, we adore you! We believe!

LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE AND THE TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION CANDLE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE LANDS (Unison)

We acknowledge, honour and respect this land and the Anishinaabe / Mississauga peoples with whom Treaty 20, Williams treaty, was signed, on the lands where we are. We acknowledge and give thanks for the lands and people of treaties and unceded territories of all who are worshiping. It is up to all of us to live into truth, respect and reconciliation with all our relations.

CALL TO WORSHIP

We are like small seeds. We don't seem to be all that important.

We can lie dormant and just blow helplessly in the wind.

But with God's spirit we can come alive. We can germinate and fill the earth with good things.

We know that alone we can do nothing, but when we are enlivened by God's spirit much is possible.

Come let us worship God.

† HYMN: MV #79 "Spirit, Open My Heart" (Words: Ruth Duck)

R Spirit, open my heart to the joy and pain of living.
As you love may I love, in receiving and in giving, Spirit, open my heart.

1 God, replace my stony heart with a heart that's kind and tender.
All my coldness and fear to your grace I now surrender. *R*

2 Write your love upon my heart as my law, my goal, my story.
In each thought, word, and deed, may my living bring you glory. *R*

3 May I weep with those who weep, share the joy of sister, brother.
In the welcome of Christ, may we welcome one another. *R*

OPENING PRAYER:

We come in worship, O God, trusting your weaver hands, trusting you will take up the rainbow threads of our lives in love to create a tapestry of promise, of possibility. We wonder what design that tapestry will display, what spirited gift it will declare. Weave us O Christ, through your vision of self-giving, that we may weave, through you, as a community of faith. Amen.

Written by Gord Dunbar, Gathering Lent/Easter 2021, page 33. Used with permission

MINISTRY OF MUSIC: "There Will Come a Day" Christena-Lynn

INVITATION TO GIVE: Let us bring forward the offering.

† HYMN OF DEDICATION: VU #108 v. 1

Throughout these Lenten days and nights we turn to walk the inward way, where, meeting Christ, our guide and light, we live in hope till Easter Day.

OFFERTORY PRAYER

O God your gifts to us come sometimes small and unnoticed. Yet they are abundant and overflowing. Accept now these gifts which come from our hands. May they become blossoms of possibility that will help to spread your love to the whole world. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

STORY AND PRAYERS FOR THE YOUNG AND YOUNG AT HEART

WE HEAR GOD'S WORD

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Jeremiah 31: 31-34 (NIV)

³¹ “The days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah.

³² It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to^[a] them,^[b]” declares the Lord.

³³ “This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time,” declares the Lord. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. ³⁴ No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, ‘Know the Lord,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the Lord. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”

John 12: 20-33 Jesus Predicts His Death (NIV)

²⁰ Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the festival. ²¹ They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. “Sir,” they said, “we would like to see Jesus.” ²² Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus.

²³ Jesus replied, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴ Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. ²⁵ Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶ Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.

²⁷ “Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. ²⁸ Father, glorify your name!”

Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.” ²⁹ The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him.

³⁰ Jesus said, “This voice was for your benefit, not mine. ³¹ Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. ³² And I, when I am lifted up^[a] from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” ³³ He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.

CHILDREN LEAVE FOR JUNIOR CHURCH

† HYMN: MV #145 “Draw the Circle Wide” (Gordon Light)

R: Draw the circle wide. Draw it wider still. Let this be our song,
no one stands alone, standing side by side, draw the circle wide.

- 1 God the still-point of the circle, ‘round whom all creation turns;
Nothing lost, but held forever, in God’s gracious arms. *R*
- 2 Let our hearts touch far horizons, so encompass great and small;
Let our loving know no borders, faithful to God’s call. *R*
- 3 Let the dreams we dream be larger, than we’ve ever dreamed before;
let the dream of Christ be in us, open every door. *R*

MESSAGE

Planting seeds. I am not great with plants. I remember in grade one we were given some dirt, a Styrofoam cup, and some Marigold seeds in April. We were to plant the seeds in the cup, care for our plants, and hopefully on Mother’s Day we would present our mother’s with flowers. That seemed good, but about two weeks into the project I got sick with pneumonia and was away from school for about a week and a half. When I got back to my tender plant, it looked very dry. And so I gave it lots of water. And sure enough after a day or two,

my plant began to poke through the ground. The thing is, I kept thinking that my plant had gone so long without any water so for the next week I gave it lots of water each day. Suddenly the healthy sprout that was showing through the ground began to look quite sickly. My overabundance of watering had killed it.

My teacher was certainly aware that this was a possibility. 6 years old, tender plants. Of course some would die. So she gave me more seeds, more dirt and a Styrofoam cup. I followed her directions on how to take care of the plant to the letter. This time again a tender sprout shot through the ground. Come Mother's Day, while most other students were able to present their mothers a marigold that was already formed ready to be transplanted in the garden on the 24th of May, I had a healthy sprout about an inch and a half tall. Oh my mother would be able to enjoy a marigold come the end of June, but on mother's day she just got a cup with a sprout in it. She had to use her imagination.

Planting seeds. All of us can name several stories about the planting of seeds. Jack and the beanstalk for instance. It is amazing what three magic beans can do. Joseph in Egypt, who because of his dreams instructed the Egyptians to store their seeds and grain because there was a great drought coming. The parable of the mustard seed that shows even from the tiny mustard seed, large plants grow. The wise saying that from the tiny acorn the mighty oak grows. It is amazing the power of seeds.

Seeds. They are still a very important part of our life. In the deep arctic in Norway, 1300 kilometres north of the Arctic circle, there is the Svalbard seed sanctuary. Tens of thousands of variety of seeds from edible crops are kept in long term storage. This is important if there ever is a natural disaster which might destroy all the living crops in the world. These seeds which are stored in underground vaults might be used to continue feeding the world.

Seeds I think also describe the day to day workings of society. For instance, we all know how infectious a person's laugh can be. I watched a newscast recently on Hasyayoga- the laughing yoga. The idea is that you get a bunch of people into a room and you begin laughing. The laughing allows you to clear your mind of your troubles, meditate on the meaning of life, and improve your overall well being. Scientists say that hasyayoga may have some temporary benefits but they have yet to see long term benefits but practitioners claim that laughing yoga does improve health. I watched the newscast and thought I could never do that. I can do a fake haha. But could I laugh when something wasn't funny. But it is so much easier to laugh when others laugh. As they say laugh and the world laughs with you, cry and you cry alone. The seed of laughter does grow and spread.

I think the idea of seeds does apply in our own life. Each one of us at birth is implanted with different abilities and skills, interests, challenges, etc. But for many of us we are reluctant to share those gifts. We don't want to seem boastful. Or we are kind of shy. Or we might feel that we are not good enough.

A high school football coach was concerned. His school used to be provincial football champions. But for several years their football program had been in decline. The team had not won a game in several years and it was getting increasingly harder to recruit players.

So he decided to conduct study. Why weren't the boys in school trying out for the football team. The results surprised him.

One group of students said that they had absolutely no interest in playing football. Sports yuck. I include myself in this group. Give me a good book any day. Another group said they had no athletic talent whatsoever. I might be in this group as well. A third group of students literally did not have time to participate in the football team. Maybe they were concentrating on good grades or maybe they had an after school job. What surprised the football coach was the largest group. These students just felt that they weren't good enough. I'd play but somebody might laugh at me. Or maybe I would try out but I would just let the team down. Don't pick me? How about Joseph or Kenny. From his study, the football coach wrote that teams had to do a better job at recruiting people to play. They had to nurture their gifts. They had to encourage. They had to assuage fears. They might even have to re-arrange practise times so that busier students could take part. The high school coach put his learnings from his study into practise and within two years, his team was winning football championships again.

So yes I think we have all been created with unique talents and gifts, unique viewpoints and experiences, unique interests and passions. But how many times do we neglect to share those gifts. One time I was leading a workshop. We were talking about learning how to appreciate each other's gifts. And I had people sit in table groups with people from their own congregation. I first asked them to describe three things that they really appreciated about their church. It took some time, but eventually all of the table groups were able to list at least three things that their church did well. I then asked the table groups to take some time and list one thing that the other people at their table were good at. There were squeals of delight as I could hear things like "Well Mary you are so good with the children." Or "Ross you do such a magnificent job on the church garden." Or "Margaret, your buttermilk are out of this world." Then I made the exercise a bit harder. I asked people to write about one talent that they had and maybe others did not know about them. Walking around as the table groups began sharing, I heard many people who said, "Well I don't have any talents and then more often than not someone would point out something like "You are truly gifted working with the children". Someone else was told, "But you can always be counted on to help out."

But then from the back of the room, at a table made up of four women who had all known each other for 40 years, there was a shout of surprise. It turns out that one of the women there was a published mystery author. She had written four mysteries and they had gained quite an audience. The other women at the table were shocked. They had no idea. The fruits of this woman's gift were like seeds that lay dormant in a vault.

The reading from John describes this well. God's creation is likened to seeds. We are called to be sowers of our seeds. If we do nothing with them, they are just meaningless seeds (oh some seeds get eaten) but as to other seeds if they are not planted they just sit there. They are not good for much. They don't live up to their potential. When we plant the seeds, it is only by the seeds destruction that the plant can grow. The husk of the seed

breaks open in order that a new plant can grow. And the new plant grows and produces more seeds.

I think the woman who did not share her writing skills is like the unplanted seed. She had all this possibility to share the talent that God had given her, but because she had been reluctant to share, nobody knew about it. The possibilities of others knowing about her work went unrealized because this woman could not take the risk to share. But if she had shared, maybe her gifts might be used elsewhere in the church. But no one knew.

I think too many churches are like the unopened seeds. Too many churches are unwilling to share their good works with the world. We feed the poor, but no one knows. We support the work of outreach ministries both here in Canada and around the world, but no one knows. We provide a safe place for children to grow and be nurtured, but no one knows. I think many of our churches are becoming like the unopened seeds because we refuse to share our good news. We are worried that our efforts are too small, worried we might be laughed at, worried that we aren't good enough. Yet our world is longing to hear good news. Let's tell our stories. Let us take the risk of the seeds and be willing to share our gifts. Our community needs us. Amen

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Creating one, we give you thanks for the wonders of the world. Our world late flat and dormant until you breathed life in it and gave life to creation. You created the fish, the birds, the bugs and animals and gave each of them a unique place in creation. For this great earth O God we give you thanks.

Loving One, we give thanks that you have made each one of us as unique people, as different as our fingerprints. We bring our different gifts, shortcomings, experiences and viewpoints to the world. Yet somehow by your grace, we are brought together as one. Thank you God for calling us to share one with the other.

Challenging one. You know that it is all too easy for us to see the differences in others. We sometimes forget that we are all your children and are all too ready to separate the world between the us and them. Yet you remind us we are your children. You tell us to put aside our blinders and see each person as your fellow child on earth. Thank you God for knitting us together as one.

And now O God we offer these prayers for others. We know that our world is divided. Right now we think of the peoples of the Ukraine and Russia, Israel, Lebanon, Palestine. Give strength to all those who are promoting the cause of peace. Open the ears of all leaders so that they may understand that where one suffers, all suffer. May we all learn to give peace a chance.

We pray for the poor, that their bellies may be fed. We remember the homeless in our towns and communities, and ask that everyone realizes that when a neighbor suffers then all suffers.

We remember all those who are crying out for justice. Give us hearts to hear their cry. We pray for all families who are suffering from economic uncertainties, addictions, and violence. May everyone's home be a place of safety and security.

Finally we pray for the people here at Dunsford United. We remember the sick and the aged. We pray especially for *Kristen Elliott and Emma Junkin*.

All these things we pray O God in the name of your Son, Christ our Lord as we say
THE LORD'S PRAYER

WE ARE SENT OUT IN FAITH TO SERVE

COMMISSIONING AND BLESSING

Friends, let us go from this time of worship. Go, knowing that with God's help our efforts might be a success. Go knowing that we are called to spread the message of love and peace with the world. And may the blessings of God who created us, the love of God who redeems us, and the energy of the Holy Spirit go with us this day and forever more.

† CHORAL RESPONSE: "Go Now in Peace" (Words: D Besig and N Price)

Go now in peace, never be afraid. God will go with you each hour of every day.
Go now in faith, steadfast, strong and true. Know He will guide you in all you do.
Go now in love and show you believe. Reach out to others so all the world can see God will be there watching from above. Go now in peace, in faith, and in love. Amen, Amen, Amen

ANNOUNCEMENTS

March 24: Palm/Passion Sunday with Pancake Lunch

March 29: Good Friday Service at 10 AM

March 31: Easter with Communion

Volunteers are needed for:

- Vice Chair of the Board
- Spiritual Leadership Team
- Leadership Development Team Leader

For information or job descriptions, please speak to John, Board Chair

- Sunday School and/or Jr. Church leaders - Vulnerable Sector Police Checks are required. Speak with Abigail for more information.

Milk bag Mats: The group meets in the Church on Wednesdays at 10 AM. All are welcome to make mats and enjoy some fellowship.

January Financials

Income: \$5,677.00

Expenses: \$4,451.80

Net Profit: \$1,026.00

Stewardship Second: With our whole hearts we seek God and to live God's way. Justice and righteousness, being kind and generous, caring for neighbours and strangers—these are more important than all of our riches and possessions.

Broadview Magazine subscription renewal: The annual cost is \$30. If you are already a subscriber or would like to start a subscription, please speak with Christena-Lynn.

FROM THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA

[E-ssentials: Protect the Rights and Freedoms of 2SLGBTQIA+ People, Vote on Remit 1, and more! \(mailchi.mp\)](#)

DUNSFORD UNITED CHURCH

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